



# OF DECISION FOR THE POCA TELLO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



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RECORD OF DECISION  
FOR THE FOCA/ELLS  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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POCATELLO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

RECORD OF DECISION

Prepared by

Bureau of Land Management  
Department of the Interior

Approved by

*William W. Vail*

Idaho State Director, Bureau of Land Management

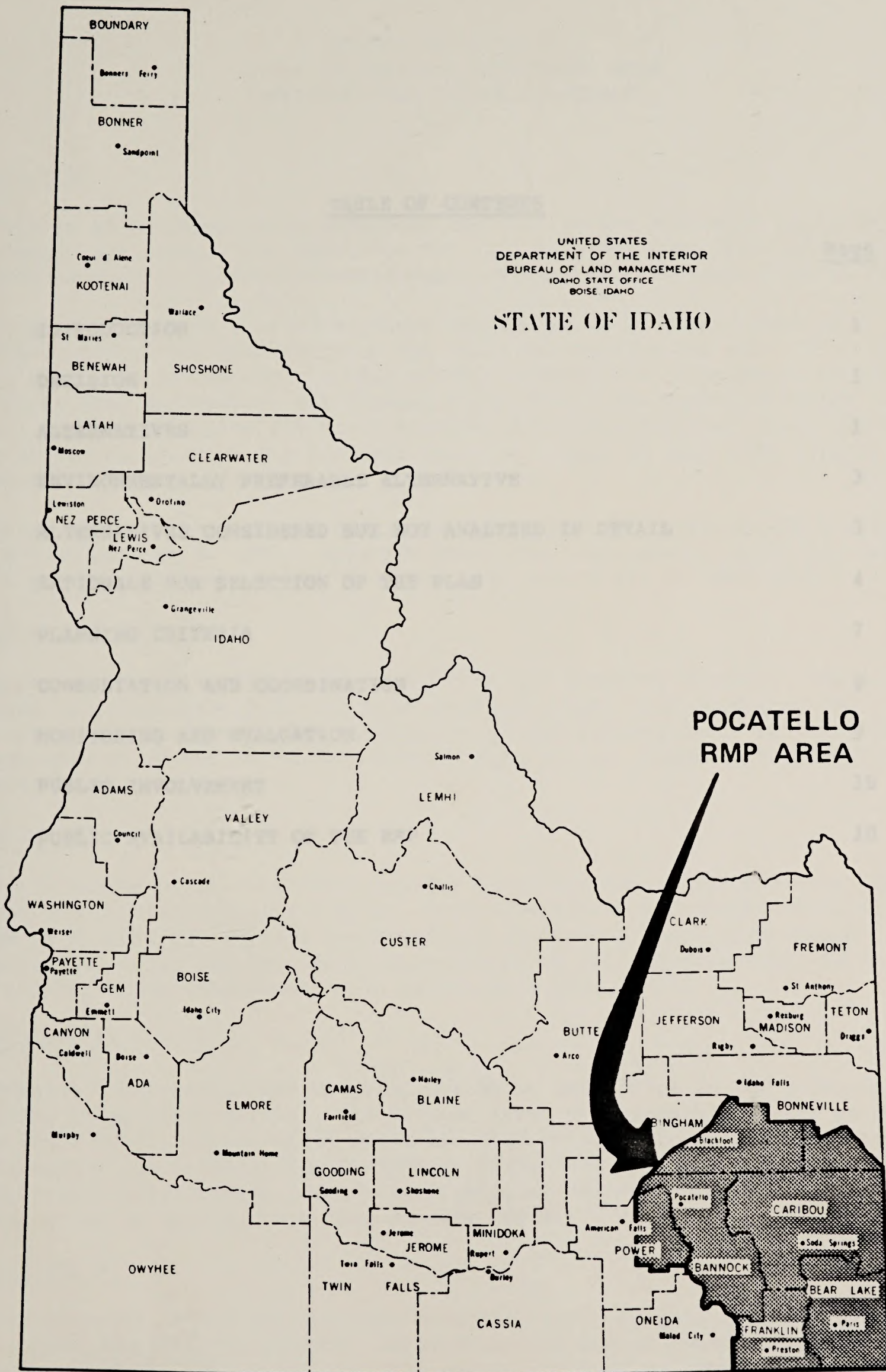
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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
FOOTSTOCK LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

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Five alternative plans were developed for consideration in the selection of a RMP for the Footstock Resource Area. Each alternative addressed the planning issues in a different way and was developed to cover a range of possible resource uses. The environmental consequences of various management options were evaluated for each alternative in selecting a RMP.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 represents the existing situation and serves as the baseline for analyzing other alternatives. The present level of management on the public lands would be continued, while measures would be taken to prevent or correct deteriorating conditions. Any changes in management would be brought about through monitoring studies and an environmental analysis program. All actions would be handled on a case by case basis.

Alternative 2

This alternative is now the approved Footstock RMP. In this alternative a mix of resource uses will be allowed. Recreation and use of privately owned and commercial use authorizations will allow for fragile resources, wildlife habitat, cultural values, and other environmental resources and will be protected. It will require funding at approximately the present level.





RECORD OF DECISION  
POCATELLO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents approval of the Pocatello Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Pocatello RMP is a land use plan that will guide resource management in the Pocatello Resource Area for the next 15 to 20 years.

The Pocatello Resource Area encompasses 264,481 acres of public land in southeast Idaho. The area includes the lands surrounding the city of Pocatello in the northwestern corner of the resource area then south to the Utah State line and east to the Wyoming State line. The Burley District borders the west, and the Big Butte and Medicine Lodge Resource Areas (Idaho Falls District) serve as the northern boundary. Many of the lands located in the Pocatello Resource Area are scattered.

The final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Pocatello RMP was filed with EPA on October 9, 1987. This ROD meets the requirements of 40 CFR Part 1505.2 pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

DECISION

The approved Pocatello RMP is unchanged from the proposed Pocatello RMP and is the same as Alternative B of the Final Pocatello EIS. See page 4 of the Pocatello Proposed Plan for the Management Action Summary under Alternative B. See page 11 of the Pocatello Proposed Plan for the Proposed Management Prescriptions.

ALTERNATIVES

Five alternative plans were developed for consideration in the selection of a RMP for the Pocatello Resource Area. Each alternative addressed the planning issues in a different way and was developed to cover a range of possible resource uses. The environmental consequences of various management options were available for consideration in selecting a RMP.

Alternative A

Alternative A represents the existing situation and serves as the baseline for analyzing other alternatives. The present level of management on the public lands would be continued, while measures would be taken to prevent or correct deteriorating conditions. Any changes in management would be brought about through monitoring studies and the environmental analysis process. All actions would be handled on a case by case basis.

Alternative B

This alternative is now the approved Pocatello RMP. In this alternative a mix of resource uses will be allowed. Production and use of commodity resources and commercial use authorizations will occur, but fragile resources, wildlife habitat, cultural values, and other nonconsumptive resource uses will be protected. It will require funding at approximately the present level.



Under Alternative B a total of 598,581 acres will be open to non-energy leasables and 44,378 acres will be closed. There will be 354,508 acres open to fluid mineral leasing, 324,009 acres open with seasonal and standard stipulations and 30,499 acres open with no-surface-occupancy restrictions. A total of 38,895 acres will be closed to fluid mineral leasing. A total of 329,273 acres will be open to locatable mineral entry and 58,188 acres closed. For mineral materials, 311,793 acres will be open and 75,668 acres closed.

Approximately 17,068 acres are identified for disposal through sale, exchange or the R&PP process. About 247,413 acres are identified for retention. Approximately 191,561 acres will be open for rights-of-way application.

Alternative B will provide 29,969 AUMs of livestock forage in the short-term and 34,276 AUMs in the long-term.

Alternative B will provide forage for 543 elk and 7,105 deer. Approximately 82,138 acres of big game range will be maintained in satisfactory condition.

Under this Alternative, 75,115 acres will be designated open to ORVs, 3537 acres will be closed, and 185,829 acres will have limited restrictions.

Approximately 13,255 acres of public forest land will be open to commercial harvest under existing regulations, restrictions, and stipulations. There will also be 28,011 acres of woodlands available for public use.

Under Alternative B, 70.89 miles of stream will be managed to maintain existing fisheries, water quality, and riparian habitat in the current satisfactory condition. An additional 22.70 miles of stream will be improved.

Under Alternative B, public access will be obtained to approximately 37,300 acres of public land.

#### Alternative C

Alternative C favored production and use of commodity resources and commercial use authorizations. Management direction would have favored higher livestock stocking levels, more range improvements, land disposal for agricultural development, and transfer of isolated or difficult to manage parcels out of Federal ownership. Restrictions on mining, mineral leasing, mineral material removal, and ORV use would have been minimized.

#### Alternative D

Alternative D emphasized wildlife and fisheries habitat enhancement, recreational values, cultural resources management, and watershed protection.

#### Alternative E

Alternative E emphasized mineral development on the public lands. The objective would have been to manage the Federal mineral estate to allow optimum exploration and development, while minimizing unnecessary impacts to other resources.



## ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The alternatives considered in the EIS would have achieved all the requirements of sections 101 and 102(1) of NEPA and other environmental laws and policies. Each alternative is environmentally acceptable. Each of the alternatives was designed to use practicable means to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature exist in productive harmony, but the emphasis is different in each alternative.

In terms of effects on biological and physical components of the environment, Alternative D would have been the environmentally preferable alternative. Alternative D would have preserved the most natural history values. It would also have resulted in the greatest increase in wildlife populations. It would have resulted in the most vegetation in good ecological condition, the least in downward trend, the most in upward trend, the lowest average erosion rate, and the least area in a severe erosion category.

In terms of economic benefits, Alternative C would have been the preferable alternative. It would have generated the greatest increase in income and jobs in the Pocatello Resource Area. It would have made the least amount of land available for transfer to private ownership and development for agriculture. It also would have had the highest management cost. The average erosion rate would have been the highest, and wildlife populations would have decreased.

In terms of social benefits, no alternative is clearly preferable to another. Alternative D would have protected the most high-density cultural resource sites from surface disturbance. Alternative C would have had the highest level of grazing. Alternative A would have had the lowest management cost.

Alternative B, the proposed Pocatello RMP, is the approved Pocatello RMP. In comparison with the other alternatives considered in the EIS, it will attain the widest range of beneficial use of the environment while preserving important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage. The effects on the various resource uses and values will be between those of the other alternatives. Considering the effects of the alternatives, including effects on biological and physical components of the environment, economic effects, and social effects, Alternative B is the environmentally preferable alternative in terms of the overall human environment.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL

One alternative was considered by the RMP Core Team but was not developed or analyzed in detail because it did not meet the criteria for selection. This alternative and the reasons for its elimination are presented below.

### No Livestock Grazing

This alternative would have excluded all livestock grazing on public lands in the Pocatello Resource Area (PRA). It was eliminated for the following reasons:

1. Resource conditions, including livestock forage, vegetation, watershed, and wildlife habitat, do not warrant wholesale prohibition of livestock grazing in the resource area. However, elimination of livestock grazing was considered on selected allotments and in riparian areas under other alternatives.



2. Total elimination of grazing would be in direct conflict with existing laws and regulations.
3. The cost of removing range improvement projects not benefiting other programs would be prohibitive.
4. The enforcement of no livestock grazing on the fragmented pattern of public lands in the PRA would be difficult at best and very expensive.
5. Public comments received during the issue identification and criteria development steps indicate a general acceptance of livestock grazing on public land, provided that such grazing is properly managed.
6. It is estimated that permittees using BLM lands generate \$1.1 million in annual income in the PRA and 143 jobs. Given this economic significance and the general social acceptance of livestock grazing, people in the PRA and the State of Idaho would not support a no grazing alternative.

The No Livestock Grazing Alternative was considered to be unreasonable and unrealistic.

#### RATIONALE FOR SELECTION OF THE PLAN

The Resource Management Plan (RMP) gives no special emphasis to any one resource but emphasizes balanced, multiple use management and is based upon a realistic expectation of funding.

#### Minerals Management

Two issues were directed toward minerals management. Issue 10 addressed mineral development and Issue 11 addressed availability of lands for mineral leasing. The Proposed Plan addresses both of these issues. Issue 10 was covered by illustrating the inter-relationship between minerals and other resources. This balanced approach helped define and clarify mineral development areas and subsequently mineral availability (Issue 11) was determined through conflict resolution.

The majority of public lands will be made available for mineral leasing, location, and for mineral materials disposals. Seasonal restrictions will protect other critical resource values and will not significantly impact mineral exploration or development opportunities. Withdrawals from mineral entry will insure the protection of those special or fragile areas while only having a minimal impact on availability.

#### Lands - Retention and Transfer

The Plan will recognize the expressed need to make lands with community expansion potential available for future development (Issue 1-Land Tenure). The public lands identified as available for disposal will have little or no multiple use benefits.

The Plan will maintain continuity in grazing allotments and retain tracts that have high wildlife and multiple use public values. Only parcels of relatively low multiple use value that are difficult and uneconomical to manage or present management problems will be available for transfer.



Access will be a key consideration in all land transfers. Parcels essential to assure public access to BLM administered public lands will be retained.

No public lands within the old Fort Hall Reservation boundary of 1898 area will be offered for disposal through sale. However, opportunities for exchange may provide benefits to the off-Reservation rights and will be closely coordinated with the Tribes (Issue 9 - Shoshone-Bannock Off-Reservation Rights).

#### Range Management

Livestock grazing on public lands is an important economic resource (Issue 3 - Range Management) for this area. The Plan will maintain most of the current livestock operations with a possibility of increasing use as a result of reducing unallotted acres. The Plan will also provide for multiple use while allowing grazing, soil protection, wildlife habitat and other resource uses. Range improvements will be designed to enhance or to have few adverse impacts on the other resource uses.

Shoshone-Bannock tribal members have a right to graze their livestock within the old ceded boundary. This right gives the Fort Hall tribal members preference over other members of the private sector (Issue 9 - Shoshone-Bannock Off-Reservation Rights).

#### Wildlife Management

The Plan recognizes the importance of wildlife habitat on public lands (Issue 4 - Protection of Wildlife Habitat). It will provide for improvement of crucial elk winter habitat, deer, sharp-tailed grouse, sage grouse, and many non-game species habitat. There will be sufficient forage and habitat available to meet the goals of this alternative. Riparian areas will be considered of prime importance and be managed to maintain or improve them where possible. Sensitive and threatened or endangered species habitat will be protected.

#### Recreation and Visual Resources

The development of the recreation sites will help meet the increasing demand for the recreation resource in the area. The Special Recreation Management Area designations will provide for more detailed planning to accommodate primary uses and reduce conflicts between users.

Areas closed to ORV use will protect soils from severe erosion and prevent direct conflicts with wildlife. ORV use in the PRA is continuing to grow and the Plan will protect sensitive resources while allowing ORV use to continue in areas with less potential for resource damage (Issue 6 - Off-Road-Vehicle Use on Public Lands).

#### Special Designations

The Stump Creek Ridge ACEC (2,483 acres) is one of the most important elk winter ranges in the PRA. Travertine Park ACEC has three unique features: rare plants, travertine outwash deposits, and a relatively undisturbed mixed-shrub ecosystem. Travertine Park ACEC comprises 223 acres. Downey Watershed ACEC (1800 acres) reserves all water on this land for the community needs of the city of Downey, Idaho.



The seven RNA/ACECs designated in the Plan are: Cheatbeck Canyon (100 acres) is comprised of excellent mixed stands of boxelder and bigtooth maple; Dairy Hollow (45 acres) contains unique geomorphic structures and a good stand of Wyoming sagebrush/needle-and-thread grass habitat, as well as Astragalus spatulatus; Formation Cave (70 acres) has pristine stands of bitterbrush, Nevada bluegrass, and shrubby cinquefoil; Oneida Narrows (617 acres) has near vertical limestone cliffs containing grottos and caves which provide a haven for a variety of birds and uniquely adapted plants; Pine Gap (232 acres) contains uniform stands of black sagebrush and bluebunch wheatgrass. It also has a rare plant Astragalus spatulatus. Robbers Roost Creek (400 acres) maintains an excellent shrub community common to this part of Idaho. It would provide a very good undisturbed reference and study area. Travertine Park (30 acres) has an undisturbed mixed-shrub community surrounded by rugged geomorphic features.

### Cultural Resources

The cultural resources of the PRA are fragile and nonrenewable. They have significant archaeological research potential. They also have high educational and visitor use potential. The Plan recognizes the nature and significance of these resources, and will recommend protective measures or public information facilities.

### Forest Management

The commercial forest lands designated as available for harvest will meet the demand for forest products from the public land. The woodland acres designated as available for harvest will meet the needs of the public by identifying firewood cutting areas and making them accessible (Issue 7 - Timber and Firewood Utilization).

### Riparian and Water Quality

The Plan recognizes the water and water related resources in the area are of great importance to the public land and the private land (Issue 8 - Protection of Riparian Habitat and Water Quality).

Steps have been taken in the preferred alternative to improve these resources through management and fencing. Other resource water needs will be taken into consideration in all management actions considered, in order to meet water quality standards.

### Soils and Watershed Management

Some soils in the PRA are very susceptible to erosion. The Plan will protect areas where severe soil erosion will occur. It will also provide the means to monitor erosion rates and develop procedures to reduce the problem.

### Fire Management

Suppression actions on wildfires will occur on all Pocatello Resource Area lands. Because of the potential threat to life, real property and high resource values at risk, intensive suppression actions will be provided on 96 percent of the Pocatello Resource Area. On the remaining acres (4 percent of the Resource Area), conditional suppression will occur. These wildfires will be managed so that damage to the environmental communities in the area is held to a minimum.



## Access

The scattered, isolated nature of some blocks of public land in the PRA provides limited or no public access across private lands. The major need for improved access comes from recreationists (hunting, fishing, ORV users); however, the Forestry and Wildlife programs would also benefit from improved access to public lands. Wherever a need to improve access to public lands across private lands is identified, the impacts to private landowners will have to be carefully considered (Issue 2 - Legal and Physical Access to Public Lands).

## PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria are the factors or data that BLM must consider prior to arriving at a land use decision relative to issues. Listed below are the planning criteria and how they relate to issues as well as RMP decisions.

1. Public land disposal involving either public sale or exchanges must meet the criteria in Section 203 or 206 of FLPMA.
2. Acquiring legal access to blocks of public lands where the public and BLM have identified high resource values must meet the criteria of Section 205 of FLPMA, which states: Acquisitions shall be consistent with the mission of the department involved, and with land use plans.

The level (type) of access needed will be determined by activity planning, legal adequacy, costs vs benefits, duration, availability of informal use authorizations, and assurance of favorable opinion of title.

3. The following factors were considered in setting livestock use levels and establishing basic management:
  - a. The economic stability of the local livestock industry in all seven counties.
  - b. Plant vigor maintenance requirements, condition and trend, as well as watershed and riparian area protection and stability requirements, must be met.
  - c. The BLM will provide habitat, including forage, for wildlife on public land. The amount of forage provided is determined by BLM through consultation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the public land users.
4. BLM will manage fish and wildlife habitat on the public lands by:
  - a. Preparing Habitat Management Plans.
  - b. Installing wildlife improvements: fences, watering facilities, brush seedings, and goose nesting platforms.
  - c. Giving priority to threatened or endangered species habitat.
  - d. Maintaining big game habitat to support herd numbers as identified by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
  - e. Inclusion of stipulations or conditions on BLM leases.



5. Control of grasshoppers on public lands is also a concern to BLM. We will continue to cooperate with APHIS wherever high grasshopper populations occur. Whenever grasshopper or mormon cricket populations exceed 8 per square yard on BLM lands next to croplands, control can be started. Infestation on "large blocks" of BLM rangeland will also be controlled.

Control of noxious weeds is a concern to BLM. In the PRA, Dyers Woad is the most widespread weed which has infested approximately 1,620 acres of public land. The BLM is presently cooperating in a Noxious Weed EIS supplement which was completed in early 1987. Individual sites and species will be handled on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the EIS supplement.

6. Public lands will be designated as either open, limited, or closed to motorized vehicles. In making these determinations, BLM will consider the following:
  - a. Public safety.
  - b. Resolving conflicts between uses of public lands.
  - c. Resource protection requirements.
  - d. Public access requirements for recreation use.
  - e. Maintaining the designations of the Pocatello ORV Plan.
7. Generally, lands containing commercial timber or other forest products such as firewood, posts and poles, and Christmas trees are available for harvest except where expressly closed by law or regulation. Some areas may also be subject to special restrictions to protect other resource values. All Timber Production Capability Classifications will be re-evaluated relative to current BLM forest land policy.
8. Executive Order (E.O.) 11990 requires BLM to avoid long-term and short-term adverse impacts associated with destruction, loss, or degradation of wetland-riparian areas. BLM must also ensure the preservation and enhancement of "the natural and beneficial values of wetland-riparian areas which may include constraining or excluding those uses that cause significant, long-term ecological damage". A variety of methods may be employed, including the use of management actions designed to maintain or improve riparian habitat, inclusions of stipulations or conditions in BLM leases, granting of licenses and permits, and development of detailed plans for watershed management.

BLM policy and responsibilities mandate adherence to FLPMA and the Clean Water Act in regards to nonpoint-source water quality management (refer to Section 208, Public Law 92-500). By the use of standard operating procedures and best management practices, the BLM will meet or exceed Idaho State water quality standards. Monitoring will be conducted to check compliance and effectiveness of these practices and procedures.
9. The BLM will accommodate on public lands within the 1898 ceded boundary all off-Reservation rights for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes with as little impact as possible to existing privileges granted through lease or permit.



No public lands within the ceded area will be disposed of through sale. However, opportunities for exchange may provide benefits to the off-Reservation rights and the BLM will closely coordinate with the Tribes on these proposals.

10. BLM manages energy and mineral resources on the public lands. Generally, the public lands are available for exploration and development, subject to applicable regulations and Federal and State laws.

Areas have been identified where major conflicts between mineral leasing and exploration and other resources exist. Environmental Assessments will be completed to develop measures which will be tailored to the specific conditions and resources affected. Stipulations will be designed to eliminate or reduce adverse impacts to the resources in conflict with mineral leasing.

Where adverse impacts to critical resources cannot be adequately mitigated, leasing will be allowed only with a No-Surface-Occupancy (NSO) stipulation.

11. BLM policy states that it is the objective of BLM to make public lands available for the orderly and efficient development of energy and mineral resources under principles of balanced multiple use management. This policy also states that withdrawals and administrative actions must be clearly justified and be in the national interest (BLM Mineral Resources Policy Statement, 1984).

Lands and mineral estate with high values will continue to be made available for exploration and leasing under all alternatives. NSO stipulations will only be applied using sound management criteria and where resource protection is required by the FLPMA.

#### CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

BLM's Resource Management Plan must agree with and support officially approved and adopted resource-related plans (or in their absence, policies or programs) of other Federal agencies, state and local governments, and Indian tribes, so long as BLM's plans also agree with and support Federal law and regulations applicable to public lands. A special effort has been made to ensure that the RMP is consistent with approved plans. No inconsistencies have been identified by the Governor of the State of Idaho, other agencies, governments, or Indian tribes.

#### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The results of implementing the selected RMP will be examined periodically to inform the BLM resource managers and the public of the progress of the plan. The results being achieved under the plan will be compared with the plan objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation will assist the resource managers to:

1. Determine whether an action is accomplishing the intended purpose.
2. Determine whether mitigating measures are satisfactory.



3. Determine if the decisions in the plan are being implemented.
4. Determine if the related plans of other agencies, governments, or Indian tribes have changed, resulting in an inconsistency with the RMP.
5. Identify any unanticipated or unpredictable effects.
6. Identify new data of significance to the plan.

The monitoring and evaluation plan for the PRA RMP is shown in Appendix H of the Draft document. The plan specifies resource components to be monitored and how, when, and where these components will be monitored. Monitoring intensity (the number and frequency of studies) will vary among areas and allotments according to the amount of information that is needed to determine if the plan objectives are being met. If monitoring shows that RMP objectives are not being met, the reasons will be examined closely. An RMP decision may need to be changed even if the problem is due to factors beyond the control of BLM, such as changes in the climate or economic factors.

#### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The views of the public have been sought throughout the planning and decision making process. Public participation in the process is summarized in chapter 5 of the Draft Plan.

#### PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF THE RMP

Copies of the Pocatello Resource Management Plan are available on request at the Pocatello Resource Area office, Federal Bldg., Room 172, 250 S. 4th Avenue, Pocatello, ID 83201, phone (208) 236-6860.

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